



INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV EASTERN AFRICA (ICWEA)

Rights. Justice. Action. For Women and Girls Living with HIV

As we commemorate International Women’s Day on 8 March 2026, **the International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA)** joins the global community in advancing gender equality. Achieving rights, justice, and action for all women and girls requires sustained investment in their health, leadership, and rights because when we give to women and girls, we all gain stronger, more inclusive, and resilient communities.

This approach aligns with two critical global themes:

UN Women Theme: “Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls” – calling for the dismantling of structural barriers such as discriminatory laws, harmful social norms, and unequal access to opportunities.

Global Theme: “Give to Gain” – emphasizing that investing in women and girls through health, rights, education, and leadership strengthens communities, economies, and societies.

For ICWEA, these themes are deeply interconnected. Across Eastern Africa, women and girls living with HIV continue to face stigma, discrimination, and multiple forms of violence that limit their ability to live with dignity, access services, and participate fully in society. Evidence from ICWEA’s work shows that violence against women living with HIV is evolving beyond private spaces and increasingly manifests within health systems, workplaces, digital platforms, and legal structures, undermining safety, silencing voices, and restricting leadership within feminist movements and the HIV response.

Through regional advocacy, community-led monitoring, and movement-building initiatives—including the THRIVE Project—ICWEA amplifies the voices and leadership of women living with HIV. Our work strengthens inclusive feminist coalitions, documents emerging forms of violence and discrimination, and promotes policies and programmes that uphold the dignity, autonomy, and rights of women and girls living with HIV.

Strengthening coalitions and solidarity movements remains key to ending all forms of injustice, particularly for women living with HIV. By working together across feminist movements, civil society, governments, and communities, we can challenge harmful systems, amplify women’s voices, and advance collective action for rights, justice, and equality.

A community voice reflects this urgency:

"We need our voices heard and our lives protected. Investing in women like us is not charity, it is building stronger communities for everyone."

On this International Women's Day, ICWEA calls on governments, development partners, and civil society to take decisive action to:

- Protect the rights of women and girls living with HIV by eliminating stigma, discrimination, and harmful laws that criminalize HIV and restrict autonomy.
- Strengthen justice and accountability mechanisms to address all forms of violence, including structural and digital violence.
- Invest in women-led and community-led movements, recognizing their central role in advancing gender equality and sustaining the HIV response.
- Ensure meaningful participation and leadership of women living with HIV in decision-making processes that shape policies, programmes, and resources affecting their lives.
- Safeguard sustainable financing for the HIV response and gender equality efforts, particularly for community-led initiatives that provide essential support and advocacy.

Women living with HIV are not merely beneficiaries of programmes; they are leaders, advocates, caregivers, and change-makers whose experiences and expertise are essential to building equitable and resilient societies.

On this International Women's Day, ICWEA reaffirms its commitment to advancing a future where every woman and girl living with HIV enjoys her full rights, lives free from violence and discrimination, and has the opportunity to lead and thrive.

Because achieving rights, justice, and action for all women and girls must include women and girls living with HIV, without exception.

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